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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/648,464	08/25/2003	James D. Ralph	F-286	8288
51640	7590	07/28/2005	EXAMINER	
LERNER, DAVID, LITTENBERG, KRUMHOLZ & MENTLIK, LLP 600 SOUTH AVENUE WEST WESTFIELD, NJ 07090				BLANCO, JAVIER G
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
		3738		

DATE MAILED: 07/28/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/648,464	RALPH ET AL.
	Examiner Javier G. Blanco	Art Unit 3738

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 13 June 2005.
- 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 13-26 is/are pending in the application.
 - 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 13-26 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)	4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)	Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____	5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
	6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on June 13, 2005 has been entered.

Response to Amendment

2. Applicant's cancellation of claims 1-3, 5, 7-9, 11, and 12 in the reply filed on June 13, 2005 is acknowledged. Claims 4, 6, and 10 were previously cancelled in the reply filed on February 28, 2005.

3. Applicant's addition of claims 13-26 in the reply filed on June 13, 2005 is acknowledged.

Specification

4. The specification is objected to as failing to provide proper antecedent basis for the claimed subject matter. See 37 CFR 1.75(d)(1) and MPEP § 608.01(o).

a. Correction of the following is required: the mesh is “non-congruent” with one of the plate exterior surfaces when in an undeflected state (see claims 13 and 21).

Double Patenting

5. The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the "right to exclude" granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. See *In re Goodman*, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Longi*, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); *In re Van Ornum*, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); *In re Vogel*, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970); and, *In re Thorington*, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent is shown to be commonly owned with this application. See 37 CFR 1.130(b).

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

6. Claims 13-15, 21, and 24-26 are provisionally rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-3 and 8-10 of copending Application No. 10/140,153. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because both applications claim an intervertebral spacer device comprising a deflectable wire mesh secured over, and spaced apart from, the exterior surfaces of the first and second plates.

This is a provisional obviousness-type double patenting rejection because the conflicting claims have not in fact been patented.

7. Claims 13-15, 21, and 24-26 are rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-3 of U.S. Patent No. 6,863,689. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other because the difference between claims 13-15, 21, and 24-26 of this application and claims 1-3 of US 6,863,689 lies in the fact that the patent claims include many more elements and is thus much more specific. Thus the invention of claims 1-3 of US 6,863,689 is in effect a “species” of the “generic” invention of claims 13-15, 21, and 24-26 of this application. It has been held that the generic invention is “anticipated” by the “species”. See *In re Goodman*, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993). Since claims 13-15, 21, and 24-26 of the application are anticipated by claims 1-3 of US 6,863,689, it is not patentably distinct from claims 1-3 of US 6,863,689.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

8. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

9. Claim 24 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The limitation “said mesh” (see line 1) lacks antecedent basis.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

10. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

11. Claims 13-16, 18, 21, and 24-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being clearly anticipated by Baumgartner (US 5,370,697 A; cited in Applicants' IDS).

Referring to Figures 1a and 5, Baumgartner discloses an intervertebral spacer device comprising: (1) a first plate (upper plate 2) having an exterior surface (see Figure 1a); (ii) a second plate (lower plate 3) having an exterior surface (see Figure 1a); and a mesh (e.g., wire mesh 44; see Figures 1a and 5; see column 3, lines 53-59) capable of being deflected/moved (i.e., “deflectable”; “movable”) under load and is non-congruent with the one of said exterior surfaces when in an undeflected state (see Figures 1a and 5). As shown in Figures 1a and 5, the exterior surface of the one of said exterior surfaces includes a substantially flat region, and the wire mesh overlies and is spaced from said substantially flat region. A joint (e.g., insert 5 having cover plates 25, 26 and reinforcement band 27) comprising a force-restoring element (e.g., elastomer 23) couples said first and second plates together (see Figures 1a and 5; see entire document).

12. Claims 13-16, 18, 21, and 24-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Stubstad et al. (US 3,867,728 A; cited in Applicants' IDS).

Referring to Figures 1, 2, and 4, Stubstad et al. disclose an intervertebral spacer device (device 10) comprising: (i) first (top element 11) and second (bottom element 12) plate members,

each having an external plate surface, at least one of the external plate surfaces having a deflectable/movable (i.e., capable of being deflected/moved; see column 8, lines 46-49; column 9, lines 14-17), convex (see Figure 4; see column 13, lines 24-26), wire mesh (e.g., Dacron mesh 21 and/or Dacron mesh 20; see column 8, lines 6-10 and lines 43-59; column 9, lines 10-18). The device further comprises a force-restoring element (e.g. core 15) disposed between the first and second plate members (see entire document).

As shown in Figure 2, there are several layers 20 of Dacron mesh, and a top covering/coating 21 of Dacron mesh having pleats 22 (see column 8, lines 6-14). Either one of covering/coating 21, or the outermost layer 22 is considered to be spaced apart from a substantially flat region of the first (or second) element 11 (or 12). The term “convex” is defined as: (i) “having a surface or boundary that curves or bulges outward, as the exterior of a sphere.” (from www.dictionary.com); and (ii) “having a surface that curves outward rather than inward” (from MSN Encarta dictionary). The contour of covering/coating 21 has a convex shape when in the undeflected shape (as claimed in claims 15 and 24) since pleats 22 “bulges outward”. Also, as it is well known in the art, said outermost surface/layer of the wire mesh is usually convex in order to conform to the concave surface of the vertebrae (see Figure 4; see column 13, lines 24-26).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

13. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person

having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

14. Claims 13-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ralph et al. (US 5,989,291; previously cited in PTO-892) in view of Stubstad et al. (US 3,867,728 A; cited in Applicants' IDS).

As seen in Figures 3b, 4, 5, and 7-9, Ralph et al. disclose an intervertebral spacer device comprising first and second plate members (e.g., 100a, 100b), each having an external plate surface (e.g., 102a, 102b) thereof, the plate members being disposed such that the external plate surfaces face in opposite directions. Ralph et al. disclose plate members 100a, 100b as convex (see column 2, lines 61-63) and as having a porous coating (see column 3, lines 4-6; column 5, lines 57-61). Additionally, Ralph et al. teach a porous, resilient/flexible (i.e., deflectable; see column 3, lines 8-18; column 6, lines 17-21), and convex (see Figures 4 and 9) fabric/mesh (circumferential wall 120) on an external lateral portion of the intervertebral spacer device (see Figures 4, 6, and 9). Further, Ralph et al. disclose ball-shaped head 207 to be received and hold within curvate volume 233 (see columns 6 and 7).

Although Ralph et al. disclose the external plate surfaces as convex to match the contour of the opposing bone surface (see column 2, lines 61-65), and a porous coating on said external plate surfaces to provide for tissue ingrowth (see column 3, lines lines 4-6; column 5, lines 57-61), they did not particularly disclose said external plate surfaces as having a deflectable/deformable surface (or mesh) thereon. However, this is well known in the art. For example, Stubstad et al. teach an intervertebral spacer device comprising external plate surfaces having a deflectable/deformable, convex wire mesh thereon (see 102(b) rejection above) in order for the external plate surfaces to adapt/match to any small irregularities in the vertebral surfaces

and to enable deeper tissue ingrowth on said external plate surfaces (see columns 8 and 9).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to a person having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have combined the teaching of an intervertebral spacer device comprising external plate surfaces having a deflectable/deformable, convex wire mesh thereon, as taught by Stubstad et al., with the intervertebral spacer device of Ralph et al., in order for the external plate surfaces to adapt/match to any small irregularities in the vertebral surfaces and to enable deeper tissue ingrowth on said external plate surfaces.

Response to Arguments

15. Although no Arguments were filed along with the Response of June 13, 2005, the Examiner believes that he adequately addressed the 102(b) and 103(a) rejections of newly added claims 13-26.

Conclusion

16. All claims are drawn to the same invention claimed in the application prior to the entry of the submission under 37 CFR 1.114 and could have been finally rejected on the grounds and art of record in the next Office action if they had been entered in the application prior to entry under 37 CFR 1.114. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL** even though it is a first action after the filing of a request for continued examination and the submission under 37 CFR 1.114. See MPEP § 706.07(b). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

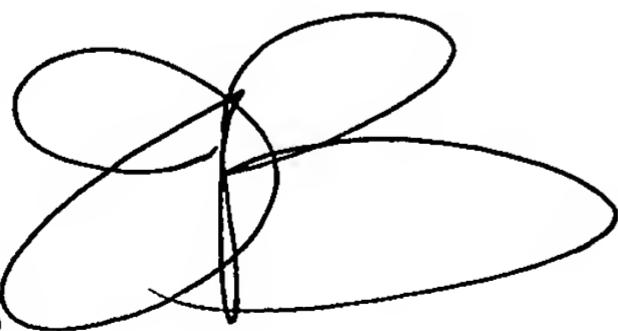
A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Javier G. Blanco whose telephone number is 571-272-4747. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F (7:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.), first Friday of the bi-week off.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Corrine McDermott can be reached on (571) 272-4754. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306 for regular communications and After Final communications. Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-308-0858.

JGB

June 22, 2005



David H. Willse
Primary Examiner